



Michelle V. Alkerton

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Note:

Author changed her name to Michelle V. Alkerton
through marriage. This file of *Paradox* was created to
incorporate her name change throughout. All poems
are as published in the original printing.

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Paradox

poetry by

Michelle V. Alkerton

Mom

*For your unfailing love, support, optimism,
encouragement and strength – thank you.*

My words are not enough.

Note from the author

This poetry collection spans a decade. Ten years of a life filled with changes and challenges. The poems, like me, are flawed. In them – I think, dream, imagine, experiment, observe, laugh, love, cry, yell, dance, sing, hope, hurt, give up, fight back, reach out, get silly, and sometimes make no sense. I write because I must. I share because I want to. As I face the challenge of creating new pathways in both my life and my mind, I hope my poems continue to express my impressions of life.

Special thank you to my son Alex, for the early inspiration, appreciation and enthusiasm for my writing. I have faith that you will become a wonderful young man.

Thanks to my sister Jeanette for always trying to find some light in the darkness. And, to the rest of my family, I appreciate that you are all a part of my life.

My life has been touched by kindness in countless ways over the last decade and I am truly grateful.

Added Note for 2007 publication:

I am grateful every day for finding Bill Alkerton, my soul mate, best friend and wonderful husband who has brightened my life and filled my heart. You have made me a better person, and I value you as a person, a man, my husband, my friend and an intelligent, responsible individual with needs, desires and dreams of your own. I hope that I never take your love and strength for granted and that my strength and love encourage you to realize your dreams.

Michelle

Credits

Some of the poems in this book have previously appeared in the following journals and anthologies.

Canada Day 1992

Inward i

Shaping the Wind

Captured Essence

Ebbing Tide

Ultimate Ceasefire

Sapphire Magazine

Woven Words

Twelve Minutes

life, love, death and a side order of poetry

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Niederngasse Poetry

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Snowflakes

Snowflakes falling gently down
noiseless as they touch the ground.

By moonlight dazzling to behold
a million diamonds do unfold.

Pure beauty blankets all I see
as calmness washes over me.

Gone now is the inner strife
each cool touch awakens life.

Deep within my very core
spirit released begins to soar.

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A Child's Eyes

Eyes of innocence
clear and bright
glisten, sparkle
edged with delight
vision untainted
youthful, free
reflect the wonder
once in me.

Harvest of Pride

My body is
the maple tree,
my hopes and dreams
the sap,
that nourishes my every
vein,
from stores
of inner depths.

Warmed by pride
my dreams
will flow
toward my fingertips,
producing pure ambitions
sure to fill
the days
ahead.

Like the rare
Black Maple stand
my visions tapped
will yield,
a harvest of
the sweetest hopes
for where
my roots
are held.

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Sunset

Brilliant orb
of amber light,
intense energies
radiate bright
last valiant ember
horizons ignite
to crimson skies
that prelude night.

Techno Time

The VCR flashes 12:00
always
I do not change it
In this age
where time
is in fast forward mode
I prefer to stay in pause
and sometimes
push rewind,
to play back images
in my mind.
Though I know I should set
the proper time of day
I choose to hold on
to my control
to freeze time
when I don't want to go.

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Gray Became Me

flashback to 1985

We sat, knees touching,
searching each others face
for some sign.
The words started to flow,
our dreams, our hopes,
our fears, held there
in mid air
between us.

My body shook
with a mix of fear
and anticipation.
My soul bared before you,
naked and unprotected
revealed my complete trust
in your love.

I gave my heart
to the strong hands
you held before me.
We paused, exhausted
from the revelations of
uncertainty, of honesty,
of love.

Still we sat, knees touching,
I searched your face
for reassurance.
Then your strong hands
closed on my heart,
twisted and pulled at it,
as you lightened your guilt.

The night of infidelity
spewed from your mouth,
details like stones
thrown in my face.
I pulled away
as tears of fire
seared my cheeks.

Then all became gray and hazy,
your face, the room, the world,
my mind.
The gray lasted for weeks
as tears of hurt
turned to anger,
disbelief of your betrayal.

We sat, knees not touching,
you searched my face
for a chance.
My heart could not forgive,
untrusting now
the walls built up,
as gray became me
our love was lost.

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Treespeak

Shade beneath
outstretched limbs
beckons rest
of weary bones.

Past to teach
from scars
of bark
and boughs
bent strange
from winter's
storm.

As fallen leaves
detached
by wind
shrivel, brown
beyond.

Hélène Bernadette Germain

Her time stroked face
of silken skin
hold eyes sunk deep
beneath the brow
that twinkle
with secret remnants
of her past;
White flour smudged
on worn black skirt
from rough carrot stick
fingers
that work the dough
for her specialty
of pets-de-soeur;
Her life rolled up
from sugared dough,
each year sliced
into rounds
that bake to glistening,
golden brown.
She tastes the sweetness
of the years
with hardened gums
beneath thin lips
that filter
off-key melodies.

Observer

In the eye
of chaos
I sit,
calm and unaffected
sheltered by
my unwillingness
to stretch out
to touch the sides;
Until beliefs
grow so strong
and fear and fury
face head on
and challenge me to act;
Knowing if I did
the change would
propel me
into the abyss
flailing and fighting
against hatred and scorn
poverty and war.
Unable to sustain the energy
to feel, to fight,
I remain safe
in the eye
at the center
slowly turning
watching outside
but not seeing.

QE II Journey's End

Senses awakened
absorb aura of riches
breathe supple leathers
caress rich oiled woods.
Flesh tingles
fills with her strength,
imprinting her character
deep in memory.
Gaze rests on land
where realities await
as hands grip her rail
to connect forever
with history.

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Writer in Distress

Words tease me
just beyond minds reach,
as frustration
pounds my temples.
This the writers' life -
consciousness disabling
desire to produce
images that work well
on white paper
still blank.
Hands poised over keys
paralyzed by self doubt,
self-conscious of amateur prose.

Survivor

Dedicated to the anonymous survivor from Hurricane Andrew

I can't know your fear,
 nor would I choose to.
I can't imagine your terror
 to face death, destruction,
 unsure of the outcome.
I can't know your sorrow,
 for the loved ones you lost.

But...

I can feel your strength,
 as your words recount
 the devastation
 that surrounded you.
I can feel your love,
 for those who were spared
I can share your passion,
 as you remind me
 how precious life is.

Silhouette

The mother's frame bends slightly
braces from the weight
of small sleeping child,
head nestled into soft shoulder.

Limbs dangle, sway with
the rhythmic movement
of the mother's steps.

A silhouette of bodies melded,
closeness that will soon be gone
as the child requires more distance,
and freedom to run.

Split

I hesitate
outside the door,
held back
by inner doubt.
When I go in,
I still feel out.
So why go in?
I don't.

When is the telling too much?

When the tears burn so hot
that skin sears and scars of pain.
Pain brought on by your words,
those carelessly flung syllables
so eager to speak of beliefs
and honesty,
they forget to consider
the consequences of being
too open
too expecting.
Now alien
my mind fills with fear,
with confusion.
Knowing we shall never be the same.
Knowing our friendship has now ended.
It's only a matter of time
before the burial.
Now nice, polite conversation
nothing deep,
nothing telling.
Weaning off the dependency of our times.

Reactions

Thoughts send impulses
orange hot
to receptors
in my brain;
harbour chameleons
stone-still gaze
to shape the colours
of change.

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Pencil Sketch

Smooth gray lead
on coarse surface white
whose texture alters
my images of life.

Haze

Words mingle briefly
suspended
then fleeting;
Challenge minds to grasp
subtle twists
in meaning.

Weeping Willow

Your tender leaves of green
overlap on shades
of cool blue sky,
then merge
swiftly downward
into cascades
rushing over jagged
slabs of rock.
The icy blue/green
empties to swirling
pools of murky black.
Black that seeps outward,
absorbed by rich
brown soil, storing
nutrients that ascend
each split and turn
of your branches;
to reach the tips
your tender leaves of green
hang heavy now
and weep
from their fullness.

Paradox of Emotions

Vital sparks
fuel my desire
to move hearts
and minds
with raw,
revealing words
trapped beneath
the surface,
muted by the fear
that unleashed
the intensity
would cause
an explosion
that scatters
mind and soul
over the earth,
irretrievable.

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Each New Year

A time
to assess
regress
confess
refresh.
To weigh
accomplishments
failures
rights
and wrongs
to see if
the balance
has shifted.
Some celebrate
some cry
some die.
An ending
a beginning
a middle
a muddle
of lost ideals
renewed expectations
melancholy.

As I Sit

Sun casts slabs
through half open
blinds.
Winds rattle
through loose shingles.
Large pines sway,
drop cones in rhythm
with short chirps
of birds.
Small hands
touch my face
as new snow
blankets my achievements,
curled up
in the corner
of the couch
molded from me.

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Massage

Fingers cramped numb
increase pressure
down sloped back,
hot needles of pain
shoot up
to stiffen shoulders,
tendons fail
in desire
to knead away
the thickness
between us.

Smoke

Feathery gray swirls
transform
to faces raging,
babies crying,
hands holding
life.

Then dissipate
to fields of wheat
slowly fading
to nothing
distance
from air.

Wrinkles

In half sleep colours merge,
bleed and blur into visions.
Is it me walking old?
Eyes strain to focus.
Visions sharpen
to reveal blurred edges
the folds of my skin;
not knowing where
to begin or end,
what they hold together.
I fight to stay,
fear to awake fully old.

The Cut of Winter

Cold air
stabs my lungs,
pulls icicles
from my throat.
Nose hairs stand
to attention
whiten, splinter
to land
sharp edge down
into my toe.

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Reading You

Escape
in your words,
travel macadam roads
through your eyes,
feel chill wind
sting your cheeks
as tombstones beckon
to be read,
ancient letters
chipped in stone,
your past mine now
as I the voyeur
invade your world.

One Right Moment

Fingers strike
wrong keys
vocal chords
wrong notes
mind pulls
wrong memories
tongue speaks
wrong words
heart misses
a beat
lungs forget
a breath
soul touches
small wisdoms
perfection
in an instant
happiness finds
a right place
in the now.

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Natural Art

shadows dance
among splashes
of sunshine
painting midday
masterpiece

Eavesdrop

Voices in melodic language
carry in the air
hang there above me
waiting for comprehension
it doesn't come today.

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Human Distraction

I didn't let the absorption occur.
The chatter, the company
made me unaware.
In silence the seeing comes.
Then the flow from creative
streams runs freely
as nature takes hold
and writes my words.

Your Portrait Alive in Oils

I focus in on shadows
each shade an edged circle
defining the folds and lines
that hold your eye centred.
Gazing out, unblinking
your noble pose deceiving,
for there lies a haunting soul
amid the dancing blue
and specks of gold.
I move slowly through the depths
of pupil black enlarging
to open up the hidden
protected spaces of your thoughts.
Fear chokes in gasping breath
as tightness pulls me further;
fingers curled, my hands flail out
grasp at the edge of blackness.
I whirl in dark unknown spaces
sights and sounds flash by
in vivid colour,
then back to black.
I close my mind
wishing I hadn't risked wanting to know
what was captured in your eyes.
For now it is I
who is trapped in noble pose.

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Still Life

shifted by earth's motion
slate fortress looms
walls carved and cracked
from layers of rock
life's phases balanced
on rough edges
of overhanging slabs

Delayed Departure

I measure depth of silent spaces
that fill thick with your indifference.
In random words laced with decision
you gauge response in shifting moods.

I pause in quiet contemplation
suspend our end with my inaction.
Balance hope against the knowledge
change is hinged on spoken words.

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Human Sculpture at Brock U

Testing gravity
balance out
shifting shapes
the essence
of movement
and stillness
the science
of living art

Refuge Between Readings at Beantrees Café (or The Eclectic Restroom)

Thick side strokes
plaster rough walls
deep mustard yellow.
Their careless splatters
grow to sunflowers
edging faded forest green
of worn wooden floor.
Solitary bulb hangs muted
centred above
an old hardwood chest
with heavy lid closed
on fractured dreams.
A mounted white canvas
captures nameless man
in bare profile of contemplation.
Cornered in shadows
below his brooding thoughts
I expose tender flesh
to empty impurities
in literary pause.

On Stage

Our silence gives way.
The protected, hidden words
reach out for closed ears
rub them, whisper softly
ask for an audience.

The house lights dim.
The performance has begun.
In a one-act play
two years of talking completed.
Questions answered,
needs expressed, changes accepted.

Yet, we are the same.
The words thrown up to mix
land back in their assigned minds.
But we talked.
From here we bottle up
each reaction, feeling, hurt
behind heavy curtains closing.

Our dress rehearsals
performed in silence
to ourselves every day,
until it's just right and then
our one-act play revised
will take the stage again.

Acceptance

His decision, my decision
nine years like this.
Should we, will we
continue like this?
Separate lives no connection
do I want this?
Aloneness.
Change would also mean aloneness.

Maybe we have the perfect union.
A union of disconnected souls
chasing our own dreams
living our own character
meeting in darkness
to refresh, re-energize
some needs will always
remain unfilled.

I will stay, he will stay,
we will go – on our paths
that lead in opposite directions
but somehow wind back
to one another as rest stops,
familiar havens in which to retreat
until confidence can be rebuilt
then off again alone, exploring.
This is who we are.

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Day's Beginning

We walk slowly,
feel wet dewed grasses
soak cool into leathered feet;
the heady scent of gardenias
carries our conversation
through early morning,
guides the direction
of our thoughts
with waxy fingers.

Foreign Performance

A bending image mimics action
in distorted shadows cast
as sure footed performer
clad in loose white costume
triumphs in the rope walk.
He tosses rough edged words
out over our sea of heads
punctuated with musical creaks
from instruments unseen.
Our ears and minds don't
comprehend the humour mixed
in foreign tongue and song
yet we laugh with abrupt endings
right on cue.

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The Sea

Life's secrets fall in darkness
in the space between the waves
breathing stops, anticipating
rolling, frothy flow
moments rest before the swell
body loosens waiting
driftwood to the shore.

Frozen Snake

Small stiff coil
decorates the path
like bracelets piled
in jewelled patterns.
With curious fingers
I trace each ring
ending at an eye
slowly opening.
Head turns warily
red darts flick
from wakened mouth
to taste the air.
Stretching, unbending
cold smoothness
slithers in side dashes
to cross my feet
in short waves.

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August

The smell of rain
clings to damp hair,
mingles with grass clippings
and smoke from the stack
of the chip truck.

Takes me to childhood
when I counted puddles and made wishes,
stopped to gaze at my warped
reflection in ripples I made.

The taste of the air thick and tangible
wraps around me
like a warm wet towel.

Each New Me Pays the Toll in a Line

Every day a new face to the world
each expression is molded with care.
Clay armor smoothed over lies
form the masks that I choose to wear.

The dried layers I peel at days end
leave crease marks that punctuate strife.
Callused fingers trace over new lines
the price paid in disguising my life.

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Down Time

mist of smoke
hangs in the air
flowing, yet still
scent of jasmine
drapes over me
sinks into open pores
as I listen to old songs
on some radio station
from another country
counting the scars
on my hands
waiting for sleep

Child's Touch

Stray hairs fall in wisps
across wrinkled brow,
tickling an agitated mind;
playing on memories
of butterfly kisses
from delicate lashes
of bright eyed child.
Smiles filter upward
removing the creases
of tension in thoughts
too long unresolved.

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University Registration

Cars line winding roads
spreading the campus
for miles in heated air
we watch - detached.
Young bodies tinged
with manhood walk
beside wrinkled lines
from worry and pride
of father's face.
Young womanhood
bounces in this year's
style pushing out
the mother's heart.
Carrying with them
only traits to be
recognized.
They are grown
now each individual
and alone in this
massive space of stately
buildings and luscious
grass, the campus
for learning life.

Outside the School

There amid the brown grass cuttings
swirling in the dust of loose gravel
blinks out this little girl treasure.
Frayed rope broken from slender neck
holds a clear pink heart flecked
with metal bits, each a wish
waiting to come true.
I rub the smooth plastic between rough fingers
wonder if a tear is being shed
at the loss of this special charm,
that will now be mixed with socks and shoes
jacks minus balls, stray gloves and hats
in that old box marked with heavy black lines
LOST & FOUND.

School Days

September's blowing warmth
carries the new term's excitement
in mixed voices that call out
beneath the shade of stable
trees that guard the school yard
alive with child.

Golden haired boy's casual shuffle
turns to awkward run as the second
bell sounds, the brick building
demands to be filled.
He answers with new pressed clothes
wrinkled with fun and dusty cheeks
hiding freckles and smiles.

Time Moves On

The leaves are turning
burnished red
orange and brown.
Today I see them
marking time
in September's wind
still warmed by sun.
When did this happen?
I looked yesterday
saw only vibrant shades
of living green.
or maybe it was the
day or week before.
The passage of time
escapes the eyes
that for a moment
look away from nature.

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One More Ride in Fall

The crunch of autumn leaves
gone in soggy morning
wet veined shapes
lick shuffling boots
attach to life once more.

Conrad Black's Mighty Ax

Faded news clippings
line the drawer,
past achievements
tucked away
as reminders;
reread now through
jaded eyes,
pulling emotions
to a swell as the
glimmer of youth
and hope are snuffed.
An empty anguish
takes their place
and now yellowed
newsprint lines
the empty boxes
piled ready for
the writer's
departure.

Pond Inlet

Rushing drops upon drops
a frothy flow
of white, clear green
and blue.

Coolness pulls me downward
riding in it's energy;
knowing it must
somewhere slow.

The drops with me absorbed
will pile on one another
to form a pond
deep and cool
edging out to stillness,
surface calm
but always active below.

Life Flow

amber leaves
blown free
to granite ledges

Soaking In

Lavender bubbles surround, attach
in small islands to worn out limbs.
They pop with minuscule splashes,
tingle on softened skin.

With slow deliberate strokes
I gather the glistening orbs,
like soft fresh snow
in a muff about my neck.

I release frantic thoughts
beneath the surface.
Drown surging worries
deep in tepid waters.

Cleansed, then I emerge
unstable in this calmed state;
wrap myself in lover's warmth
draw relief from a sensual cry.

Tiny Red Hearts

handfuls of hot cinnamon
that stick on teeth
numb the tongue
fill breath with fire sweet.

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A New Season

Cold fingers of October's wind
detach coloured leaves,
casting out life
to crumble in drying heaps.
Each curling leaf
a shadow of time
that feeds the winter hunger
in return to earth's roots.

Cold Snap

Still, biting air
pulls muscles
to rigid form.
Breath expelled
in white clouds
hang in frozen moments
facing me.
First snowflakes
fall in lace disguise,
entrapping my mind
in patterns
newly formed.

No Healing

Punched with needles
full of cold
then dull grinding pressure
twisted nail being slowly
methodically pulled away
one final nudge
gone.

Bruising pain
throbbing blue,
drains clear brown
not blood.

Black, blisters full
clothing soiled
dressing doesn't end
the wound.

Eight weeks
hardens, crusts
drains wet again
no healing.

Interpretations

Scribes of centuries past
bequeath unanswered questions
to us another generation,
weavers of words and ideas
in lofty phrases or
boldly painted images,
we question truths of man
the cycle never ending.
Society in which we live
guides us in our progression
of thoughts presented
as wholly new
though held in ancient sand.
Yet pen to paper the ink
does still flow freely
seeking out understanding,
dried and presented for
thoughtful examination.
And this post modern age
studying so carefully past words
what will we leave to the
next centuries of thought;
no shining truth I trust
will glow from our naiveté
but maybe some larger picture
of what time has wrought
to man and earth.

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East Coast Rocks

smooth bodies meld
over rough shelled sands
sea salt pulls energies
pitting eyes in graying form

Night's Touch

The biting emptiness
pulls neck muscles taut.
Flow of defense
silenced in black air.
No water streams
from vacant orbs,
only questions
of where strength lies.
Weighted wrists
poke characters
to fill some void,
but heaviness proves
the master.
To this dark
I succumb in dreams,
where survival comes
clean and sure.
To capture lost wisdom,
align warping images,
search for high spirit
I rode not long ago.

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Turn to Slush

Curving windshield warm,
attracts crystals cool.

Mingle softly meld,
alter liquid flow.

Jagged downward waves,
bottom window snow.

Moments Past

My memories
in slow motion
play the shadow dance,
that tints each
gentle rise
of cool
white hills;
Those hills
that held our home,
enclosed by
strong wood fences,
that protected
and defined
our little world;
Our world
of silent wonders,
where smoke tendrils
carried wishes
in upward strokes
that seemed to mingle
with the hazy blue expanse
of winter sky.

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Winter's Arrival

spruce limbs laden heavy
stoop to brush rising ground
a full moon casts
an ominous glow

winds rearrange tossing skies
unaware to spread drifts
of cold thoughts
in the snow

In the Midst of Life's Lessons

Slow heavy steps trace
the same path every day.
I'm tired of this worn down
cage I'm trapped in;
waking to another day
of running on empty,
empty except for the
pain and uncertainty;
those fill each aching
joint, each numbing tinge
of tired hands, tired mind.
This repetition to attempt each day
the possible, the impossible
capture some shred of the fire
that use to blaze inside,
feeding it more and more
yet the flames don't leap;
just small sparks dimmed
in the shadow of sadness.
Been here before, many times
on this tight rope between
giving up and fighting back.
Knowing each time
I've somehow managed to choose
the right way to fall;
yet still it's hard each time
to see my way clear
to breathe in deeply and carry on.

Renaissance Blur

Anguished mind
cries for comprehension
wisdom, words.
Self doubts well up
as large drops
that land in echoing patters
on thin pages of black ink.
Past words wash away
bleed into one another
smearing understanding.
Running phrases
drip punctuation
along the spine
to land in puddles
at my feet;
spreading outward
thoughts not grasped
ink stains
of hopes dashed.

Pain's Grip

Your anger confines me
in a straight-jacket
of seething tension.
Thick toxic fumes
fill my tightened lungs
with lost hope
and weighted guilt.
Mind floats light
disoriented
as your mood pulls
all oxygen away,
leaving me to suffocate
bound by taut ropes
of undefined love.
Your spirit in turmoil
hammers relentlessly
on my shriveling form
recognized no more
in the mirror
of our life.

End Thoughts

Small burning embers
of each pain I endure
smolder and light
a dim path
through past moments
captured in vivid
warm touches
from people
I've met and admired.

Now as I feel
all hope being snuffed
somehow the fire
returns
in true words
meant to help
each glow one by one
with the reminder
that still I am loved.

The Keeper of Words

Her gift
lies behind
knowing eyes,
the third generation
of the women
who sacrificed,
struggled through
life's changes
accepting
with strength, hope
and love.
Left to her now,
the time
for revealing in words
to the world
the survivors
of the family line.
To write out
the images,
the secret glimpses
that somehow
shine bright
from their hearts
and make their history
a narrative tapestry
that winds through
the passage of life.

Necessary Action

Closed off from life,
succumbed to the
simple mechanics
of each day;
former emotions
join the trash
of my former self.

I've joined the masses
in admitting
human defeat.
I now know why
I couldn't comprehend
their behaviour;
joining them is the
only understanding.

The clarity is blinding.
The calm, the nothingness
swallows you whole.

Her Days

Sliding through
moments of calm
straight into frantic
breathlessness.
She understands so completely
and understands nothing
all in the passing
of a single moment.
Her life played out,
the focus on the negatives,
the dark images, dark words
that shadow her existence.

Season Passing

The glitter of falling
garland catches the eye.
Small touches of a joyous
season two weeks past.
Colourful cards a decade old
share the memories
of friends we've shared.
Small plastic tree weighted
with copper is dwarfed
by the ornaments
surrounding it.
These are the remnants
of our holiday
Little treasures that we
pack away for nearly a year,
then sort through
on a cold winter night
preparing for frenzy
and songs, love and life.
I said I'd take it all down
two weeks ago.
Yet here I sit gazing around,
afraid of the emptiness
that will most certainly follow
the departure of gold, dark greens
and holly berry red that add
so much life to the rooms,
our life, our hearts.

The Moment Passes

I sit, third generation apart
on the outer edge watching
as daughter curls next to mother
woman next to woman infusing strength
with an arm stretched around
hand giving energy.

And me on a hard wood chair
book in hand, close enough if needed
yet too far in spirit to connect instincts
numbed, jumbled between my roles
as granddaughter, daughter, and mother.
Understanding the fear,
worry, strain of sickness
and seeing a stubborn elder relenting,
admitting a fragment of weakness
accepting help.

My eyes read and reread
the story laid before me
nothing sinking in, the book
a tangible object in my hands
not the reflection of the bond
unfolding or folding before me
losing the thread between
the fiction and the reality
and the unexplainable
strength of emotion.

I turn the page, the moment gone
as my mother withdraws
climbs gingerly out of bed,

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sure now her task complete
her slender figure retreats
attentive now to her cough,
her upheavals.

And I still sit, third generation
book in hand, eyes wandering
from one form to the next
still outside and learning
of life lessons between
mother and daughter.

Chocolate Reprieve

Four dozen chocolate cookies
baked in sour mood
built on the day of unknown quarrels
that came with slanting rains
and bloated belly.

A finger raised for silence
taken for rebuff
throws the day to past responses
to crave sure warmth of covers
that hide the sudden tears, fast beating heart
in anxious quandary.

The chocolate, a necessary pill
to swallow and abate
foul useless words fast on the tongue;
best to chew on dark
brown circles melting
than on bitter words thrown out.

Unsteady hands now falter
with dull grease patterned foil
to cover the remains of my saving grace
until tomorrow, to cure new woes
at this table sloped off balance
like my mood today.

Rug on the Wall

"Why do you have
a rug on your wall?"
The query comes
quick and simple
from young petulant lips
of boy with dark curls
that frame round face
and the next question
already formed.
Too late as I find the words,
my lanky blonde son
chatters with importance
nearly bursting with
inside information,
"to cover up the blotches
the last lady left behind,
there's more over
there and there",
sure arm points out
the flaws of our existence
to new found friend.
I half smile, turn my back
on young expressions,
feel half naked in my home
send them out to play,
then answer to myself
...because I like it there.

Six Poets Perform

first poet

projects a mood
words read, slow
in steady rhythms
ebb and flow
sway me, move me
beckon my soul
appreciate
the meaning

second poet

tall and taut
nervous gestures
eyes wide might pop
my body tenses
edgy, perspires
can't focus on hands
that cut the air
frantic
words lost

third poet

discusses
primes me
hopeful I'll grasp
the meaning
so sure of my
ignorance
is unsure of herself
though strong
emotions
hit home

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fourth poet
the joker,
no confidence
in short jots devoid
of real meaning
his hand nervous
rubs neck
too often distracts
from any connection
I might try
to attach

fifth poet
stands straight
as a pole
no movement
at all
accent bites at me
bitterness swells
no facial expression,
but words from
her hell

sixth poet
intense eyes
pull me in
builds up to
meaning, the
place that he's been
risky subject for
some, but he
handles it well
so engaging
my heart pumps
I can see
the whale

Altered State

Unaware how my life's changes
would so alter each perception,
a different voice emerges
since the year of silent prison.
I recognize small traces
in vibration of the sounds,
but the rhythms of each image
cause me sudden wonder now.
Fresh ideas take hold and write
new perspectives of a life,
excited mind creates new vision
from old limits finally gone.

Obsolete

The machine breaks down
daily now, as if it senses
the impending end
like it's human operators
has been deemed obsolete,
useless.

I watch helpless to stop
forward motion,
aware how this delicate
balance of power is all
controlled by nature and
the nuclear plants scattered
random across our dying country.

The next generation of computer
literate, totally dependent masses
will be lost when the power
surges, then goes out completely
and human skills become a
priceless commodity.

Seize the Day

Her mind measures
available strength.
Today she can handle
literary rejection.
When the response
fills her post box
she might not feel the same.
Today she can deal with
painful little breast lump.
When the test comes back
who knows how she'll feel.
But, today she can deal
with things put off
while she balanced
between breakdowns
of emotional crisis
that sapped all energy
and fed on every bite
of sheer stubbornness.
Today she discovers
new poets from old,
finds excitement in
the poetic reality,
that briefly allows
new visions to exist.
All because today
she has strength.

Fear in Fast Forward

Sharp nailed fingers poke, rub, circle, push
on seemingly foreign flesh.
Search out the villain, the hard pea
that cries out in needle pain - too often.

Simple call to doctor sounding calm and aloof,
no hurry to check, just a lump in small breast.
The doubts arise quickly of sure strength to deal
with this tiny problem, in lumpy tissue
that juts out just barely, no need for support.

Now fingers grope - check left against right
sure that it's all in the mind; just fat
accumulation felt more against rib cage.
Anxiety grows from this need to be
sure lumps and bumps hold no meaning,
no strange masses or shadows graded for intensity,
the measure on how the patient should fear.

Numbers and letters that gauge
how severe the treatment need be if any
can change the maybe already mutant cells
that hold their own wars in unsuspecting
body parts, the same parts viewed sexually
that may soon become the pariah of daily living.

Silent Vigil

Weary body
aches from fitful
sleep.
Images unwelcome
cloud still groggy
mind.
Strength relied on
to get through
today.
The endless wait
for doctor's call
hopeful.
Shaking hands
rub test site of
breast.
Feel the lump
that announced
pain.
Low voice wavers
speaks to the self
relax.

Only Words on Paper

In the silence
concerns are covered
from stranger's eyes
lover's ears
mother's knowing
glances.

Kept closed
no person will
have cause for worry
fears reserved
for the immediate
mind.

Fill the days of
waiting with sleep
fitful, aching
stillness.

And music loud
through headphones
to clutter racing
thoughts.

Maybe just one
more day of the
madness will
continue.

Then news of
tests that altered
these days
may reveal
the silence was
needed.

Cycle Continues

I chastise the fear
that causes waste
of sunshine
new warmth of
a season that
finally chose to
announce itself
here.

I beckon the
strength that was
felt so definite
in young body
old mind just
days ago.

Should labour
in dark soil
watch colour
erupt as smiles
that change
the landscape of
faces.

Instead of rooted
in this dark
airless room
frozen in
silence awaiting
a destiny.

Temporary Reality

Seize the day
the sunshine
false bravado
as nature speaks.
The soul does
listen as it pleases
future in fast
forward.
The simple moment
of here and now
obliterated by
images morbid.
Mind not
mature enough
to allow the day
be what it is.
Curling fingers
push on the
familiar the
simple characters
that make up
the words
of a life.
Steady beats
fill swollen ears
keep body rooted
between then
and when
which should
be now,
yet somehow
never is.

Nonsense

Tests recalled from last summer
stress the major factor
in unexplained pain - a wrinkle,
simple twist of skin inside the stomach
that caused a week of worry, from
one extreme to the other.
'Maybe just a dust speck on x-ray film'
to 'the former carcinoma left
remnants to spread at will
through walls of tissue'.
But it was only wrinkles marking
age in strange places.
So this waiting results likely
nothing was found with messy sonogram.
Just delays from the bustle of active
office and overactive frantic mind.
Should develop ways to control
throes into anxiety attacks brought
on by unfounded fears.
Don't think, relax the body, empty
the mind and activate energies outside
of the immediate self.

Distant Tenant

Sits alone
absorbed in history,
stranger's thoughts
caught between
hard covers.
Neighbours become
the backdrop of her day,
voices that beckon,
berate wild children.
Laughter that resounds,
amid gentle music
of metal chimes
that sway below solitude
of wooden landing.
The exposed retreat,
private only
with the flower boxes
built up on railing
and ever dancing
shade spots from maple
branches growing
thick with new leaves.

These provide subtle cover
from probing eyes,
expected questions
that break
into active mind
that merely seeks freedom
of space beyond
the dark confines inside.

Wooden Landing in Bloom

Surround myself
in colours,
petals of every hue
startle the eye
into believing
fragrant blossoms
can alter the days
with their crepe
paper shapes
that surround
pollen pockets,
and their delicate
strength to withstand
strong winds
and hard rains
pounding.

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Sweep of Sunlight

Warm light washes
in a widening path
over pale flesh,
worn slabs of tender
muscles moving
in small arcs
to life's tempo,
the motion
that awakens
impatiens violet hearts
as delicate petals
unfold to absorb
midday sun.

Seeing Through

Diamond cut
glimpses of
passing moments
the light breeze
of life.

Patterns that play
through trellis
to frame beauty
caught before
downcast eyes.

Relief in a Heartbeat

Ringing phone
snaps busy mind
to attention.
Two rings pass
as anxious hand
fakes calm,
then grips smooth
plastic to still
ringing ear.
Distant voice sings
"All clear."
and repeats
"Your tests were
all clear."
Response finds dry lips.
"That's great, thanks."
and receiver fills
cradle again.
Two seconds tops
ended the fear.
A mere heartbeat
wiped clean
the week of distress.
All Clear.

Defining the Chaos

Table and chairs offset clay pots
and mementos, the objects placed
to fill empty corners, create a statement
of taste, a space for solitude.
Displaced daily by careless baggage
dropped with innocence
that clutters the meaning.
Streaked helmets cracked, balance
on curves, beside soft balls and plastic toys
discarded moments after grasping.
Newsprint papers hardwood floor
beneath table angled by kicking feet
that arrange roman patterns on bulky covers
spilled from another room.
The room where young restless hands
throw unused treasures to the floor
like broken dreams and shattered wishes.
No order can survive the anxious
energy of youth shouting out the anger
of conscious thought alone.

Shift

Spring abandoned
it's late arrival,
to follow winter,
the cold gray
hopelessness
that caved in the
days, clinging
to low hung
clouds strung heavy
across strange
changing skies.
Outside smudged
storm windows
summer bounded
forth instead
like a puppy excited
with the company
of humans, shaking
off old earth caught
in furry pads not
yet callused from
chasing white
seamless clouds,
that scatter
new azure skies.

Lawnmower

Blast, rumble
motor grinds
below me,
vibrations
cutting through
body, sputtering
too loud to control.
Heartbeat fumbles
jars the mind
to discard the
fresh cut thoughts
in blowing arcs
over concrete
sidewalks.

Garden Justice

Scorched edges
random, wilting
chooses the
outspoken not
the weak blooms
that are hidden
in shade of
bold laughter
choking on
salmon and
tangerine petals
adored in
their flavour,
willing eager
deaths, heads
upturned smiling
in conviction
of their power.

Words That Don't Fit

Brief pause for
pleasant banter
an awkward fit
for cautious image,
that sheds the
expected and
squats on the towel
laid out inviting
the words to
surface and slant
in blue across
ringed pages.
This is the age
of self shared
on individual terms,
let out in tiny
bundles that won't
bore or impose
on unknown
characters congregated.
Peace can be
squandered easily
held tight to
breast, protected
to enjoy the silent
waves alone.

Cut From Bush

There's a poem
on your table,
in euonymus
branches growing
from water filled
glass centered
in black paint.
Yellow leaves
litter the space
calling out the
end, swept
in handfuls
off the edge
to cupped hand
that orders
disruption of simple
death scattered
in circles
to arrange
another pattern
for open eyes
held in the long sigh
of unconscious
beauty caught.

Last Day

No tears shed
not openly
for all to see
the sweet goodbye
bitter in cause,
heartfelt in
reality of this
our last moment
as a team.

Our members
dwindled,
whittled down
by progress,
that insistent,
relentless motion
of change.

Arms encircle flesh
in final embrace
of friendship, support
of our futures
unknown like
everyone else's.

We turn
on our heels
backs to past
teasing, past
comforts, go
forward alone
in already
sentimental moments
toward a new
age, new space
in time.

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Summer Solstice

Slender limbs
grow heavy
with new growth,
pointed leaves
lift in unison
to praise the sun,
then bow down
in gracious
dances with
warm winds
pulling eyes
upward as
shifting waves
sound out the
call of oceans
a thousand
miles away.

Natural Contrasts

Winds build up
rustling leaves
playing against
each other,
tips and veins
connecting notes
as solemn
tree bent rigid
stands silent
in the distance,
it's leafless twigs
reach out across
the coolness,
a stark silhouette
against hazing
blue air with
no spaces
only white
floating birds
carrying life
across their wings
to still moments
in time.

Your Wilderness Eludes Me

Who are you
that ventures forth
through brush and grasses
shooting up two feet
into uncharted air?

Who are you
that wanders and explores
to catch the grasshopper
in mid flight
and chorus the cricket's
rubbing cries?

Who are you
that crawls down low
to lift the
mushroom cap
in search of
sheltered life?

I've tread the broken
path from your
excursions
seen bent grasses
slowly rise
attempt to cover
your intrusion
and protect
your curious stride.

But never have my
eyes caught sight
of moving image
so adept
at covering
endless questions
that wander in
your wilderness.

Carol's Free Day

slim body bends
browned in
labour of
hoe slicing
earth,
ejecting the
greens that
choke out
the good,
steps backward
pulls roots
skewing ripe
earth that
wakens chirp
cries from
ready birds
perched overhead
to boldly
announce
fresh food
that lies open
revealed in
long rows
askance from
garden bed

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Turn Around

in the distraction
scenes change
shadows move
forward with winds
clothes blown
dry, touch
the butterfly
wings that
flutter to alight
on spreading
petals of single
rose fragrant
with summer heat

As I Walk

the old lady
wheels bright
red geraniums
in bloom
down riverbank
blossoms bounce
as wheels creak
over rocks
tilting heads
and flabby arms
to jiggle and flap
in dizzying
portrait of aged
flowers on
the move

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Steve Bauer Trail

rocks shake
my foundation
on thick wheels
moving swiftly
as toned down
legs push
on pedals
down, forward
harder
unused muscles
quiver soundless
from exertion
forced on trail
but stubborn
mind pushes
on, fights off
shaky limbs
searches back
the moments
when strength
was not a chore

Connecting Shadows

peach essence permeates the spaces
gentle breeze splits flame
wafts precious scents
to dance in candlelight
faint glow casts our shadows
rhythmic movement on bare walls
to portray supple bodies
mounting new heights
tenacious touch awakens flesh
as rising and writhing
exquisite pleasure grows
to untamed moments
tracing each sensation
with moans that bathe curves
in darkness and light
our sensual cries
reveal basest instincts
eclipsing the night

Sue Shines Through

silver thread hairs
rebel the foreign assault
but fall defeated
in clumps deserting the flesh
to expose simple beauty
of smooth white skull
that invites uncovered image
to speak out the strength
and shout the hurrahs
from mind
inside knowledge
that dances to rhythm
of woman's inner song

Thistle Rm. 245

gray streaked cement
pock holed in parallels
closes in the coolness
along sides of sloped theater
as animated humorist
bounces comic words
inside the brief spaces
of laughter's haunting echo

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Weak Moment

sense forgets purpose
as anxiety builds up
to burst the moment
in fragments of regret

Conference Kismet

I am the dragonfly
darting over words low,
strong voices stretched
to explore stories' growth.

I am the roadrunner
caught in mid dash
to smile, touch elbows
of kindred spirits past.

I am the night wind
blown through conversations
to catch passion's laughter
within warm embraces.

I am the waterfall
overflowing the moments
rushing past nature's limit
to flood lonely spaces.

I am the fire flame
fresh, exotic and young
to emerge wise and astute
gently calming the sun.

I am the shadow
whose hand shakes the sky
to explode hidden dimensions
sense awakened inside.

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Out There Now

erratic winds
flit halting
words to stick
in trees like
dandelion fluff,
airy, open
unprotected thoughts
that can't be
drawn back
with magnets
to unsure lips
tumbled open
in cautious request
of help to reclaim
lost voice

On My Writing

My poetry is me
in rebellion
and elation.
I write moments,
regrets and snippets
of space.
I hold images to
paper to wonder
results.
I follow no rules
just the beats
of my heart.
I write emotion,
of pain, hope, love
and hate.
I write uncertainty,
depression, cautious
moments on waking.
I write where I am,
who I am
at the moment,
which is in constant flux.
I write beliefs
that change
as I grow from the page.
My poems
joined together
are words of a life,
which convey
an endless cycle
of me being me.

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Begonia Blossoms

velvet red petals
dropped in fluid
crystal hope
bring admiring
touch of wind's
gentle stroke

Body Art

four knobby legged children
connecting outward become
spoke pattern pinwheels
shape designs on the sun

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Celestial Song

shrill voice of night child
shake moon-shells loose
surf dust of planets
wobble sound on tar roof

Patched Poems

Poetry is
a magic moment
wrapped in
threads of gold
gently sewn
emotion
that glitters
when told.

Poetry holds
heartbeats
in large
open hands
to offer up
the life flow
that surges
in man.

Poetry follows
shadows
loping through
dim alleys
to shape
contorted images
in folding
word patterns.

Poetry rips
long grasses
from fields
of the mind
to lay out
hidden treasures
in summer's
wide sun.

Poetry spreads
dusted wings
flying through
endless space
lighting
passion's promise
in night's
warm embrace.

Poetry touches
fingertips
against cool
crystal gems
to radiate
word energy
through slender
moon beams.

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Word Dust

poems leave
fingerprints
on the soul

Fireflies

tiny moon beams
flicker in night's
open hands
heartbeat each thought
against cool
dusted wings

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Unexpected

curling tree limbs
steal the breeze
pull blue peace
from sky's hand

Night Driving

fog people
form in rising
haze legions
blindly drifting
suspended
to their deaths
in headlights
dispersing
faint moisture
to scatter
lay wet
over warm
metal hoods

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Hold Your Breath

untangled fingers
pull moonlight
underwater
to capture
minnow magic
curving back
on the sea

First Gray

peeks out
in a curl
of eyelash
hemming
reverse insight
to lids
sinking deep

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Dreaming Awake

faint clouds
ripple the sky
like a washboard
of brushed
fish bones
swimming
high into
the eyelid moon

Clay Painter

terra cotta
mouths
gape rough
dust petals
flamed red
pigment spills
outward
to gild
passion stains
over worn
baked earth

Boot Betrays the Man

Resentful of his exclusion
from the night's rising
honour of distinguished
poetry award.

His cocky rebellion
sparked in insolent shadows
blazed an imprint
in neophyte's mind.

As his worn cowboy boot
ground out glowing butt
heavy into shined
parquet floor.

He exposed bitter envy
stamped in blackened embers
that fused ego smudged
ashes to wood.

Untended Garden

cool rain
droplets
glisten,
coat limp
leaves displaced
in patches
squared
and stringed
like animals
caged
in some
green zoo
forgotten.

Lie Still

I believe there is
a huge maple tree
grown sideways
underground,
a branching mass
that looks on me
from spreading
grasses long.
I touch it's rough
scarred oval eyelid
peeking from the earth,
still as a dozing
dinosaur unblinking
when I move.

Goodnight Sun

swallows
sing soothing
melodies
as the moon
shares
the sky
with pink
mist clouds
of sunset
long on
the horizon
pitched
with green
tree tips
hushed
in reverence
of day's
closing
lullaby

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Eye Grit

tiny creatures walk
their sand tracks
through squinted lids,
blurred perceptions
scratch salted orbs
in unbalanced spin

Power Surge

Whining power saw
cuts rough ideas
in ripped shards
of disconnection.
Casting mind debris
now formless
to the ground.

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Cloud Cover

the sky snakes
it's way through
mountainous white
spilling cerulean rivers
in mutable contours
of whimsical sight

In Transition

The process begins
with reassurance
that slackens
strong hold
of protective bonds.
Active presence is shed
to allow movement
and distance
for ventures beyond
our life sphere.

Scraps

I shred the page
of hopeless
words in tiny
bits,
trash the useless
thoughts spilled
in ink,
to mark each
helpless phase
thrown in
the bin with
all my
yesterdays;
Forget each
isolated feeling
and move
toward new
loneliness.

Silent Abandon

legs crossed in silence
numbed by absence
tightened in fury
of collapsing reason
joined in word limbs
thrown wide
toward lost season erasing
dreams no voice
from muted instincts
rise to be aware
heard in this final stage
nothing flows forward
senses dulled in fear
moments trapped
in abandonment
alone, still
silent nothing

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Tossed to the Sea

in isolation
visions collapse
in insomniac
frenzy writing
life's fiction
to hurl insecurities
in shattered
fragments
piercing
tide's motion
ensuring anxious
worries will
build in a wave
and drown
conscious reason

Mid-air Reflections

I sit suspended on roped wood
two feet above dry earth
knotted strands thrown over
strong limbs of old maple;
Wind swings me in cautious
arcs through blue air
as I mouth words
of mother earth
supplying our needs;
Like our lives on loan until
we return them to ground
fertilizing next generation
of indebted humans
that feed roots of another
tree in another field
across eons.

Titles Connect

Herds of stars pool
on the subject of waves
in the night watches
the double-headed snake
hearing the woodthrush
low tide on Grand Pré,
nature be damned
all worlds lead
to cold colloquy;
The dark stag
at tide water
a cautionary tale
on the edge
of early morning sounds,
white lies waking
the uninvited diver;
Where I come from
there are hostile nations
coming back against description,
madwoman of Utrillo's world
standing on tiptoe
moon in all her phases.

Walk Along the Harbour

body weight leaves
uneven prints in sand
mixed with lake debris
beneath our feet the crunch
misplaced of shells once living
and the parched seaweed
laying a pungent paper trail
in shallow rises faded
as remembered eyes
search lucky stones
embedded by stilled waves
now ebbed back in patience
with each rubbed rock
hands toss back smooth
flat moments as tokens
grazing surface, water-rings
of simple treasures found

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Trucker's Wife

in ill fitted shoes
she walks a
separate future
from the man
filling her heart
and their son
at her side
grown in the
absence of Dad

Other People's Business

In darkness bodies congregate
below my open window.
Accusations and foul words
fly up into the still night.

No faces seen, only voices
recognized in building fury.
Woman's loud judgments
overpower man's seething defense.

I keep silent, eavesdropping
on the drama unfolding below me.
Watch as a lone officer advances.
No sounds now.

Tires on gravel departing.

Today, in the light
it's as nothing happened.
Tenants go about their business,
and I'm left with my own impressions.

Over the Road

Encased in rounded steel
we drive hours on hours,
stop at coffee shops
to relieve ourselves and refocus
bleary eyes that continue
to read white on blue signs
weaving our way along
Highway 7a to Ottawa.

The radio cutting in and out
as fogged hills approach or
recede, we can't tell, the
misting droplets change
our view as we attempt
to capture the moon in
hazy orange hanging there
in front.

Puddles that aren't
really there, reflect our
headlights and the waving
motion of wet air
hypnotizing, as I try to concentrate
on reading the map by lighter
flame, the heating metal collar
burning fingertips that tap
out the pain
on cramped knees.

Unworthy Attempts

As I scramble for
more moments
you distance mind
and body
caring for other's needs.
Hammers nail,
saws cut
wood for new shed
and grease
colours fingers
as the car beckons
repair.
Here I sit alone
efforts quashed
to bottle up some
time together
before this life
changes forever.
With you on the road
gone to your adventures
to your own dreams
which exclude family.
Leaving me to hold
the fort, manage
the house and
care for our son alone,
my opportunities
controlled by
the school calendar.

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Endless Search

seeking romantic in the ordinary
mystical in the mundane

her days are a chase
of lost moments

recaptured and redrawn
into the incredible

leaving off the reality,
moments when viewed

with a pause in stride and open eye
can reveal centuries

yet this is lost on the woman
seeking the complicated

afraid that with simplicity
her life is meaningless

Losing the Day

In ragged night clothes I usher him off to school,
then close the door to retreat with his blanket
of gold and copper, to the couch where I lie
oblivious to the sunshine.

Attempt an uncomfortable sleep
with night driving man rolling restless
on the other side of the wall.

I surrender to the aches and sluggish movements.
Lulled by the overworked pump on the fish tank,
rolling and bubbling the unclean water
around bodies of cichlids that splash demands
in small puddles on the sticky floor.

Centering Candle

Flame burns
cinnamon scent
of red wax
encased in green
blown glass.
Shadows dance,
radiate patterns
over fake
wood grain.
In semi darkness
I try
to erase the day,
want to feel
the ridged glass
and the heat
as liquid pools.
I flow with it,
through it,
escaping the harsh words
of myself.
Each point
of light
a shimmer
of today's moments
gone.

Sliding Ground

As I roll through the day in my
mind I see the late sleep wasn't

wasted because there was sunshine.
A body expresses itself by it's own light.

I did breathe in the strange air of
a too warm January day and commented

on the spring of it to the young mother
pushing a stroller in Town Square.

My eyes did rest on the mud as I
swiftly changed my step, feeling

the earth's soft cushion that should
if true to season's form be hard

encased, frozen with ice.
The ice that isn't built up here,

is raining down in cutting sheets
northeast in Ottawa and Montreal.

I watch, puzzled at the news of power
outages, road closures, state of emergencies

and remember Grandma was to be
rolling home through now glazing

surfaces. No tightness takes my breath,
only nagging wonder if she even

left the home she was born in or is
holed up somewhere between past

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and present to wait out the weather.
Now I read Wiebe and Butala to learn

the terrain of the prairies and feel
a disjointed, misconnection with

myself, with Canada and the layers
of earth beneath my feet.

Claiming It

I must read your lines
to decide what it is, you
expect from me.
Is it lies or confessions,
positive images held up
to you, to shadow the
inevitable?
I've never prepared for
this eventuality. Your dying.
As we discuss spirits,
nature and our doubts, I
feel we've said it all before.
Yet, this is more immediate,
holds a new meaning
between us.
Caught between building up
your hope and accompanying
you in your acceptance.
I want to scrape away the
tumors surfacing your flesh.
I want to pound them down
to pulp, as I cry out "Don't
let them take you!".
Instead we laugh about the
handsome doctor that
raised your heart-rate.
We talk of the cruel
weather, fighting back
against man, proving it's
power to us the powerless.
I offer small favors of
rubbing tiger balm on
your now twisted back,
of errands and fresh baked
short-breads to melt

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in your mouth.

And we hold our reluctance
tight, afraid the words
will make this all real
and the moments
unbearable.

How I Would Celebrate You

for Sue Whalley

I'd trim all your smiles from my alyssum
and sprinkle them on the ground,
that we walked and knelt in together,
as we shared in the joy of planting your garden.
I'd buy the brightest red and yellow paints
and with large wavy brush strokes,
paint a mural with your laughter.
I'd hold your wind chimes over my head
and with each sound I'd revel,
in the music of your words.
I'd picture an amazing blue so deep
and then swim through it,
with the whales you love so much.
I'd lie down under the full moon's glow
and howl as I watched your star being born.
And each autumn, I'd pick up the first red maple leaf
and whisper your name to the birds.

Viewing the Angles from Here

The details have come
to a point,
topping this pyramid
of tackling
the necessary stones
we've laid.
And now we are
descending
cautious, reluctant steps
you on one edge,
me on another
scaling down.
Catching a foothold
on small imperfect moments,
taking a breath,
then small groping
hands, unable to let go,
not ready for free-fall.
Inexperienced as we are
in this stage,
I realize we are at
opposite planes
and as we descend
lose sight of each other,
the base widening.
Now, we are both
on our own.
Communicating
through a barrier
that distorts our words,
but the feeling, connection
of some unforeseen energy
sparking small arcs
of lucid emotion.

Teaching Me a New Language

Watching your movements, attempting to participate
in the world you now inhabit more and more
throughout the days.

Our moments capped with your smiles and hands
endless motion going about the regular business
of your routines, like a mime.

Your bed the stage, for each visitor, your special
audience, sharing in your memories as fragments
of words communicate.

I see, you are aware they hold some meaning
somewhere in the chaos of shadowed edges
filtering your thoughts.

And then I wonder if I'm understanding anything at all,
or merely trying to attach some comprehension to
the disjointed moments between us.

But, you held me and expressed the amazing way
in which two humans can communicate using
different languages.

You were, I know, explaining in metaphor how we
are now relating from our different respective
realities in the mind.

And I'm totally awed by your ability to employ
the devices of poetic language, when you seem so distant
from the present space we share.

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Circle of Your Light

for Sue Whalley

On the day of your leaving
a strange white sun
hung in a glowing ring
behind the gauze of sky.

After you had left us
I raised my eyes to see
that white was glowing brighter
radiating points of light
as if your hand
released the energy.

~

Your final breath
Your single tear
Your generous spirit
Your eternal light
Will glow within
All our hearts
Forever

Housekeeping at the Retirement Home

in my critical world
each wipe of the hand
is judged against perfection
expecting what cannot
be obtained by me
just a mere human
wrapped in an uncomfortable skin
that blisters and reddens
from sweat and water
dirt and grime of the days
that I clean after;
the moments spilled
from aging bodies
held in a prison-like
existence, alone, left
in a nice building
filled with false caring
as they watch the days pass
dreadfully slow and empty
until they too pass
then the elevators
are hung with thick cushion
so the walls are not marred
by yet another aging tenant's possessions
as they take up residence
among the depression
of not being needed
and of my insignificant
reason for walking among them

The Second Floor

From my window
I watch two lives unravel
in what should be
a private encounter
curses thrown out in anger
bounce off the cars
and remaining maple leaves
that quiver in time
with my stomach
below me, the disruption animated
through a picture window
but the characters
are real, no chance
for another take
as in movies of love gone wrong
she sits slumped on the grass
head down in a quiet
surrender, the words
all used up, her body
all used up and I
have the option
of moving away from the scene
preparing for my day

No Answers

In the early evening
with vain attempts to thwart
confrontation, my innards
were shifted in a tight knot
standing between kicking
feet and hateful eyes
I saw the effects of neglect,
of undisciplined youth
over-medicated by doctors
quick to label.
Reason could never win out
over shifting eyes and damaged
mind of this young boy
who in four words could
twist me up so tight.
“I’ll kill you too”.
His statement repeated.
No remorse after those words
splayed out of his lips.
cocky and arrogant
he knew there would be
no reprisals for despicable
behaviour, for he has never
been taught what it is
to respect anything,
not even life.
So, I allowed the horrible
words threatening me, to slump
me up in a trembling wreck
of tears as I later clung
to my mother, searching,
for answers that weren’t there.

Closing the Year

between the moments unwelcome
there lie the precious bursts of creative freedom
solving the intricacies of problems that others created

that exhilaration of finding a solution
figuring out what needs to be done, how to do something
right amid all the wrongs of my days

looking forward and forgetting to stop, to appreciate what
is before me, not ahead but standing right in front begging
for my attention, my interest

the shame of lost kindness, lost in the frayed nerves
of imperfect parenting, knowing each day
will bring another chance to offer love

always hoping I'll rise to the opportunity
instead of falling back in the heap of impatience
that has marked most days since my childhood

I give myself another chance, give him another chance
one day the contrariness between us, will slide away and we'll
enjoy
the intensity of bonds strengthened in our characters

I can even hear our laughter rejoicing in that distance
that I know will close in quickly as the days become months,
years, decades

in this reassurance that all will be right
as the sun rises tomorrow, I shuffle off to my empty bed
dreams tugging at the edge of my eyelids

Just Moments Before

the hot flash
overpowering her senses
as each sound rumbles
too loud in her ears
the pump on the
fish tank distracting
tapping feet above
her head
watching the footsteps
invisible as she
leans back
arcing, stretching
out the sinewy tendons
in calves too often
crossed tightly
beneath her
a heated nothingness
envelopes her
then darkness and
tiny light flashes
dancing around
her eyelids
going down

Cold Knowledge

changing perspectives
I step outside the circle
to view a stranger
slowly, gradually
creating a distance
of silent air,
building a dome
of hard impenetrable space
to protect, hide
the offending thoughts
the deep regret
of wrong moments
that can't be relived
or altered
to bring hope
to the outcome

no words or gestures
from this angle
can affect this other sphere
as a man burdened
prepares for another
spiral downward
– step careful here
history repeats, repeats, repeats

inside I cry
an anguished sob
of knowing
I will lose
if I can't step back
into the circle
before it is sealed off,
what fears lurk there

opposite to my fears
of being trapped inside it,
his space slowly
becoming smaller
until it rotates and spins
into one tiny speck
that a brisk wind
will lift off and carry away
to nothing

I've lost this time
even before I began
to realize the need to fight
too complacent
in the resolve
that I would silence worry
and resentment,
so as not to push
the wrong planes
now seeing he needed,
wished for that push –
not his time
I'm only human too
my strength has limits
I can't cope again
with being pulled into
his abyss

so he must conquer this
alone
as we all are truly alone
inside ourselves
I must have confidence
that his strength will endure
and bring him back to me
from his darkness
– faith and love
remembered enough

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to provide the fuel
of action

I hope

I wait

meantime attempt

to build a huge cushion
in creative visions
of colour

Looking in the face of truth is sometimes the hardest to bear.

Reincarnation

we are made up of molecules that shift
and stir into being
shaping what and who we truly are

when I die, my molecules will be burned,
rearranged in some strange place
where they steal your jewels and mash your bones
into fine white powder

maybe then, my molecules will become paper,
that 60 pound kind that feels substantial
between your fingers

*part of a ream used to print out thoughts and poetry,
recipes and mathematical equations in a book that young
and old alike will hold in their hands, flipping through,
reading, pausing, pointing, questioning the passages lain
out across my planes*

cool raindrops will slightly wrinkle me
when a storm approaches
before the young man can finish the sentence

and early mornings, large glops
of grape jelly dripping from toast
will stain my fibers with smudges of coloured scent

up late under a small lamp,
creasing to remind someone where they left off
and holding a special petal, pressed to savour
a moment too soon passed

then one day boxed up and carted to the local bazaar
with a 10 cent sticker pasted over my inscription
this book belongs to...

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Interpreting Your Stars

long hairs shift
between pages
of Italian phrases
misunderstood
translations deny
ambiguous stirrings
compelled by
a foreigner's heart

Colours of the Moon

Say the colours of the moon — in detail
the beginning
of something expressive
creating an image
for imagination
and reference to something real

no wisdom
in what lacks substance
no enlightenment
from repetitive auras
of nothingness

speak of real life,
of truth as you know it
there will be value
in what originates
From your heart.

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Mirage

amid the dry
tangled grasses — patches etched
with sunlight falling
from willows
her image lies
looking upward
into my eyes
shocked by the curled
edges of skin

Wildness

I am the frayed string
of the dragon kite
tangled high in the willow tree
begging the wind
to free vermillion me.

I am the soft seeding
dandelion blown
on freeway breezes
and floating in
her cup of tea.

I swallow apples whole
and spit out sapphire seeds
waiting for blue lightning
to strike back at me.

I am the bends of a sumac tree
forming the light
cast on clay mountains
and dancing asleep.

I shape rock into memory
and paper into diamonds
that glitter double images
on fallen oak leaves.

I shiver like yellow
and prowl like red
I dance in azure
and wear black to bed.

I hide in the crackle
of a burning tree limb
and sneak around backward
with a leaf on my chin.

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Angel's Cake

in angel's cake
treasures found
scooped from crumbs
fallen in her lap

little girl sits
wide ribbons frilled
eyes shut tight
for wishes truth

Transforming

She was the buttercup petal
that needed warm breaths of a child
swimming underwater
in a sea of sunshine
poured from a grecian urn
on all her yesterdays.

We became the dissipating
white of cloud edges
colliding on the mountaintop
of shimmering moon beams
gently stroking our heads with wonder
and filling our pockets with stones.

They were locked up coins
heating the insides
of a velvet pouch
with minted silver tongues
answering every thought
in cool hushed tones.

And so madman...
throw me the crab apples
that lay at your feet
run naked through cornfields
make fisherman weep
cast butterfly wings
in a logical mind
then you'll have landed
on the moors of mankind.

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On the Wing

wishing whale songs
never brings reason
to the surface
of strange dreams
but sometimes
if I time it right
cast iron crows
gleam colours
in the scoured
margins of steam

Breaking Barriers

shaved off edges
of light and sound
gather in small curls
of time piled
in a fragrant pot pourri
to kindle small flames
and glow into the eye
of midnight

our stories flare out
from almond shaped images
and bubble in the foam
of a tossing sea,
we share the moon wrapped silence
fretting over stilled air

as the raven
returns to the flame
a ribbon of smoke
slowly curls, stretching upward
to bend the troublesome urge
into motion
in a wave of anxious reason

nothing but I'm here
sloping –

groping
shallow breaths

Preservation

and so it goes
the cycle
begins again
as the raven
flies off the post
his brief stop
back turned to me
explaining everything
with his disinterest
and I begin again
the closing up
the preservation of me
by not allowing it

Hollow

She shapes herself hollow
with matter arranged
from dissolving echoes,
slowly folding the silence of nothing
as it dissipates
into the smooth edge of twilight.

Today

the heat is slow today
floating on calm water
as the carp just below the surface
cast dull orange tints
along mossy rocks
forming the sloped bank
of the canal

today, I let go of the bitterness
throw sarcasm
to uprising winds
allow the birds
to take bits for their nests
and leave the rest
for still green cherries

today, I will allow the peace
of thistle and buttercups
to swell inside
the hollow sounds
and remain
a silent mystery
as I patiently await
release

Rebellion of a Body

mirroring my imperfections
legs no longer taut
weakened by unknowns
rise of an unseen condition
displays itself without subtlety
sudden fatigue
overtakes every breath
every muscle and joint
perplexed, shortened
the mind attempts
to compensate
but falls short
as words, thoughts collide
recalling themselves
in backward sentences
fragmented, sharpened or dulled
changes within seconds
within themselves
a body lays
unable to comfort itself
each limb dying
feeling only a strange pain
of being unconnected, apart
from the whole

Always Questions

Seems far too long
since creative freedom has surfaced.
So much chaos in an already chaotic life
filled with pain, uncertainty and mere aloneness.
So where do I begin again?
So many beginnings, so many endings.
Adapting to my realities takes focus,
and often ignoring the unknowns, the forebodings.
Can I write again? Can I capture something?
Can I find some depth, some meaningful
wanderings of my pen?
Am I just so stuck
in the bare reality of survival
that imagination and excitement
have been totally destroyed?
Are those place – so called deficits of scarred tissue,
where my imagination once existed?
Should I go exploring? Do I have the strength,
the energy, the courage?

Always questions with no real answers.

Mind Bend

It always surprises me;
how I can go from quiet contentment
to lonely discontent so quickly.
Too much thinking I suspect.
Too much of nothing.
Not enough of me struggling
to reclaim the moments
that add up to time.
Well spent or wasted?
But who's to judge?

Uncertainties

The curve of a smile
hesitant words
when the heart has been touched
deeply and frightened
unsure of responses.
I communicate much better
through poetry
with its ambiguity and power of heart
deep down feelings shed
and then back to the closed
protected soul.
I wish my verbal skills
could match the feelings
I need to write.
Fearing that,
I seem to back off
sending mixed signals
of closeness and distance.
Ah, but perspectives and perceptions
alter with light
and the shadow
of thought analyzed.

Just to be

Living in my heart
wallowing in thought
and now I feel the calm
of shared moments
unknown far too long.
Afraid, but only slightly
expectations – I have none.
Each day, each word
if they can make us feel
then I am happy
just to be.

Nothing

Been moving on impulse
before mind can over-analyze
the small pieces of hope
I keep scratching on paper
to give away
and move another soul.
The question –
What's the worst that can happen,
if I share these impressions?
Nothing is the answer,
and that makes me smile.
And if nothing happens,
what have I lost?
Again, nothing is the answer.
I will only gain
from sharing my thoughts,
to pull from myself
what's been locked up
and maybe begin something else.
Life is good to me.

Walking Contradiction

I invent harmony
in countless scenarios of hope.
Knowing full well that reality
sits squarely on my shoulders;
the weight forcing me to keep my eyes open
and my heart protected.
But, in my waking dream there is laughter,
and a peaceful knowledge of love.
This, coming from a realist
who still has the ability to dream.
Where you and I walk hand in hand,
eyes open and enjoying the wonder
of the world around us, the world between us.
We lounge together, hands exploring,
caressing unknown territories.
The silent expression of ourselves.
We support and define each other
in small acts of kindness and encouraging words.
Aware of each other, but also standing back
allowing the other to breathe, to be.
No desire to control or overcome another spirit.
Only wishing to share small drops of our souls.
We mingle and separate—
instinctively knowing the times of our flow.
Why not this harmony?
Dreams should be full of joy.
You are in my waking dream—
you play a pivotal role.

Reaching

Hoping the informal,
the familiar,
didn't scare off
a tender soul.
But, if that's all it takes
well time will tell.
Life is what it is
Words shared
can envelope and occupy
the heart and mind
or chase like old demons
from a bitter past
that still invades the present.
The sun will shine
the trees will shelter
and I will still be me.

Solo

Realizing the calm of walking solo.
Deep down instincts can't be cast off so easily.
Probably always meant to be
and I just have to be conditioned
that one day reality will sit a bit easier.
No wishing – just living.
No waiting – just knowing I'm strong,
a survivor next in line of a long tradition
of strong determined women.
No question – the strength rests in my soul.
The sounds of contentment, the blues I can feel
but always overcome and rise to be the best me.
Strength and the enjoyment of nature and song.

The Guilt of Life

Tired of figuring
worn down considering
all the possibilities
the ramifications
of my imperfect parenting.
No sense groping
for explanations
of the incomprehensible.
Decades downwind
the windings and causes
of a life disturbed
will all be laid
at my feet anyhow.
No matter my worrying
trying to do my best.
I'll never measure
more than a fault line,
exposed and dug into.
When adult reasoning
finds its blaming path
back to me.
Because they do find
their way home
always innocent.

Freedom to be

Careening and breathless
countless emotions tugged at me.
Hope, fear, need, desire, sorrow
and many nameless scatters.
Now I sit alone, just me.
Arms tired, head aching from too much of everything.
Unsure of my strength again.
Wanting to be held, but glad I'm just me here.
Freedom to be – that's a beautiful thing.

